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PUBLIC LANDS, USA

THE STORY OF AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS

Bureau of Land Management

PUBLIC LANDS ☆USA☆

USE ☆ SHARE ☆ APPRECIATE

U.S. Bureau of Land
PUBLIC LANDS, USA

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the balanced management of the public lands and resources and their various values so that they are considered in a combination that will best serve the needs of the American people. Management is based upon the principles of multiple use and sustained yield; a combination of uses that takes into account the long term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources. These resources include receation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife, wilderness and natural, scenic, scientific and cultural values.

Americans are rediscovering the public lands — 300 million acres representing all that remains of the Nation's original public domain.

What are the public lands? Where did they come from? What are we doing with them? This booklet answers these questions.

Bureau of Land Management
California State Office
Library

EXPLORING YOUR LAND

If you took a long walk around your landed estate, you would find recreational opportunities, wilderness areas, and wildlife of all descriptions. You would find cultural artifacts that whisper tales of ancient peoples who lived here long before the first European settlers set eyes on this continent. You would find deserts, mountains, prairies and streams.

You would find both solitude and excitement.

Your lands contain many developed recreation areas and campsites, ranging from primitive to elaborate, complete with electricity, water and sewer hook-ups. But that's just a small part of the outdoor experience they afford to visitors.

Each year, millions of people hike, camp, hunt, fish, on the public lands. Many roam the land in search of semi-precious gems. Others simply enjoy the open space as they drive by, often not even realizing that they are the owners of all they survey.

Wildlife abounds. Many thousands of game animals, ranging from antelope in Wyoming to moose and bear in Alaska, use your land. Non-game animals, birds, fish and other critters, some too numerous to count, others that are rare or endangered species, can be found on the public lands.

Some of your land is wilderness — wild, roadless areas where man is but a visitor, who leaves nothing on the land but a footstep, and takes nothing from it but memories. The Bureau has identified 24 million acres for wilderness study. Some of that has already been formally designated as wilderness by the Congress, and additional areas may be designated by the Congress as studies are completed.

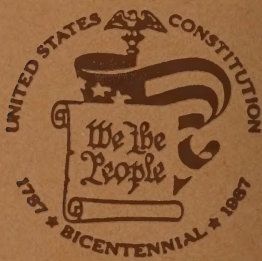
Wild horses and burros roam parts of your land, living links with the Spanish adventurers who explored the early west. To help keep the number of these animals in balance with nature, each year the Bureau rounds up thousands of horses and burros from the open range and puts them up for adoption by private citizens.

THE CONSTITUTION: FOUNDATION OF THE PUBLIC LANDS

The year 1987 marks the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. In celebrating the anniversary of this remarkable charter of freedom, Americans also commemorate the history of their public lands, a concept that is also 200 years old.

Inspired by Thomas Jefferson, the framers of our Constitution agreed that those undesignated lands west of the colonies should not belong to the individual states, but owned in common for the benefit of all Americans.

Thanks to the wisdom and foresight of our forefathers, that has been, and continues to be the role of America's public domain, the Public Lands, USA.



Printed and distributed by the Bureau of Land Management in commemoration of the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution

BOUNTY OF THE LAND

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The fertile forests of western Oregon, for instance, are among the most productive in the world, yielding lumber to build America's homes and other forest products that make life better for us all.

Cattle and sheep graze the public land in the western states, while in Alaska, herds of domesticated reindeer depend on public lands for their survival.

Your public lands also provide energy to fuel our economy and turn the wheels of commerce. Thousands of oil and gas leases provide more than six percent of America's oil and gas needs, helping to reduce our reliance on unstable foreign sources of energy.

Coal, the nation's most abundant energy source, is mined from public lands, and geothermal energy is harnessed to provide heat and electricity in some parts of the country.

Fees, royalties and other receipts derived from the sale or lease of public land resources amount to almost a billion dollars each year. Much of this revenue is returned to the States in which it is derived, adding to local economies and reducing local tax burdens. The BLM also administers a program of payments in lieu of taxes, based on the amount of federally-owned lands in counties and other units of local governments.

THE BLM PEOPLE . . . WORKING FOR YOU

The Bureau's employees pay careful attention to the management of your public lands. They see to it that as many uses and activities as possible are accommodated — a key feature of the "multiple use" concept. They also practice "sustained yield" in managing the many renewable natural resources found on public lands, so that today's demands do not diminish the resource base that will be needed by future generations of Americans.

The job requires many skills and talents. Foresters, range conservationists, wildlife biologists, soil scientists, surveyors, engineers,

recreation specialists, and many other disciplines are employed by the Bureau to care for and manage your lands.

YOU CAN HELP

Despite their training and skill, BLM employees alone cannot manage 300 million acres of public lands. With only one employee for every 33,000 acres, they need your help!

You can begin by offering the Bureau your comments and advice about managing your land and using your resources wisely.

To aid in making decisions about how the public lands should be managed, the Bureau of Land Management has developed a comprehensive planning system.

Land use plans help land managers decide which areas are suitable for development activities, and which might require limited use or controlled activity. In short, land use plans form the blueprints for wise use and stewardship of the public lands.

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YOUR PUBLIC LAND HERITAGE

The concept of public land goes back to our nation's earliest days, because the question of land ownership was very much on the minds of our founding fathers.

The framers of our Constitution decided that all land generally west of the colonies would not belong to the new states, but to the federal government to be used for the benefit of all Americans.

Thanks largely to Thomas Jefferson, the Continental Congress adopted an ordinance setting up a survey system in 1785, two years before the U.S. Constitution was written. Accurate surveys were needed before the new public lands could be identified for sale or other disposition. And, in 1812, the General Land Office (predecessor to the present-day Bureau of Land Management) was established to oversee the surveying and disposal of public lands.

Among the earliest disposal actions were grants of land to veterans of the Revolutionary War. Public lands were also sold to encourage settlement and to raise funds to repay debts incurred in the war.

Later, grants of public land were made to new States entering the union, and for the creation of Agricultural and Mechanical colleges and universities.

The Homestead Act permitted settlers to obtain land for agricultural purposes. Grants were also made to finance the construction of wagon roads and railroads.

Millions of acres were set aside for the establishment of Indian reservations, and beginning with Yellowstone, many national parks have been carved out of the public domain. Other lands were designated as national forests, wildlife refuges, military reservations and for other special uses.

Lands were also granted as an incentive to miners, whose discoveries of gold, silver and other valuable metals over the years encouraged our nation's westward expansion.

This is your public land legacy.

THE PUBLIC LANDS TODAY

Today, more than 300 million acres — most of which lie west of the Mississippi River — remain in the public domain. Taking their place alongside America's national parks, forests, wildlife refuges and other federal preserves, these lands are owned in common by all Americans.

The public lands are managed by the Bureau of Land Management, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Created in 1946 by consolidating the Grazing Service and the General Land Office, the Bureau manages all resources on the public lands.

The Bureau is also responsible for surveying the public lands, maintaining public land records, and recording mining claims.

In 1976, the Congress put an end to large scale disposal of public lands. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act mandated that these lands remain in public ownership in perpetuity, to be managed by the BLM under the concept of multiple use. This means they provide a variety of uses, and produce many goods and services that benefit us all.

The public lands represent the very best of what is now our nation's last frontier, an unending link with our past, and a bridge to our future.

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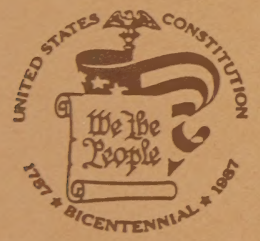

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